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ERSES

by

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VERSES

BY

ELIZABETH BRIDGES



Oxford

B. H. BLACKWELL, BROAD STREET

1916

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I.

WE will yet linger
 where strange rivers lie,
We will yet ponder
 Beauty's flowing sky,

Still to quicken more
 life's quickening change
Still without a guide
 lone regions we range

Seeking the far source
 of a fleeting flame,
Though it no place hath
 nor moment nor name,

Though lead no whither
 Beauty's roaming skies
Nor questing rivers
 nor far vision'd eyes.

2.

SONG.

O FOR a hill !
O for a vale !

O for an old love
Far and pale !

O happy woods !
O laughing rill !
What living love
I bear you still !

O summer joy
And winter cheer !
O memory
So warm and dear !

For still to me
Thy faces come,
Thy loving life,
My Love, my home !

3.

ALL thy sorrows
 beauteous Queen
 Are the serene
 clouds that screen
 Thy tall mountains'
 bright desmene ;

 And the weeping
 of thy woe
 Is the gracious
 overflow
 From joy's bounteous
 plains below ;

 And how radiant
 is the scene
 On those mountains,
 and how green
 Are thy pastures
 beauteous Queen !

4.

SONG.

WITH my wild-doe
I may enter
All the coverts
Of the wood-folk shy,

With my fairy
When I wander
Magic elves
Round about me fly,

With my kind one
With my glad one
Softly gazing
Charming all that's by!

5.

O F briars and thorns
Weaveth she her gracious garlands,
From barren unkempt pastures
Culleth she her posies so gay.

In every place
Findeth she unquested beauty
Yea even in my spirit
Sainthood, the lofty thought not attain'd.

6.

SONG.

ON my gift a flower I laid
That she who loveth all fair
Awhile should arrest her there

That she whom all beauties dower
Taking then the fragile flower
Might touch too what I had made.

Though she still see not nor take
The life that for her sweet sake
Is travail and weariness—

(O lest she tenderly guess!)—
On my lips a smile I laid,
Ah soon and swiftly to fade.

7.

O VER Autumn's fading land,
Over wastes of restless sea,
Wingéd hope hath followed thee

Singing, "O thou summer fair,
All warm joys are in thy hand,
Every burning thought is fanned

With thy loveliness"— But now
Faint his song becomes, and low,
Ere it reach the winter here.

8.

KINGFISHER blue,
 What fashion you,
 Darting in the bare willows by the stream

Who making not
 Song nor social note
 Silently flash to us your vivid gleam?

Quick streak of blue,
 What shadow you,
 Quitting elusively the bank's green?

Thoughts not to say,
 A vision's subtle sheen,
 Love's vivid kingdom sharply dashed away,

And that bright way
 That ours had been
 If following madly we had raced astray—

Kingfisher blue,
 Cruel work you do,
 Livening with your darts the dying day.

9.

ORPHEUS.

“O GIVE me happiness that leaps and sings
That with the luting laughter of my pleas
I win the comradeship of happy things.

“Or torture me, and let contrition’s flame
Melt me like music to diviner shame
So I may win to them on bended knees.”

Thus prayed lone Orpheus, and the waving trees
And creatures and gay flowers and mountains high
Bowed them, and dimly wondered, and lay by.

10.

SOFT sinking weariness shall be thy bed
Sore-laden traveller, whose aching feet
Now leave the duteous road long-travelléd.

Soft weariness, more gentle than bright joy
Whose kiss enraptureth the ardent boy,
Than eager ecstasy or triumph sweet.

More calm than loneliness that queenly stands
(Viewing the ocean whence her gaze is filled)
By the long reaches of uncharted sands

Ere to the deeps her dreaming eyes are led,
And earth's far noise is by her wonder stilled,
Or changed and dimmed and weirdly memoried.

II.

WHEN turned away
 Drooping his banner white
That eager knight
 Who for one glorious day
Had urged our courage on the strenuous height
 Then down we lay
Nor recked what should befall
 When turned away
Sadly, our wistful knight,
Knowing full well our weak and breachéd wall.

ALL day have I wandered
 In forest maze
 Aseek for clear water
 Where no water is.

It cannot be far off,
 I hear entuned
 Its quiet rippling
 Under the damp ground.

All round me the lush fruits
 Are juicy, yet
 Though I of thirst perish
 Yet will I not eat.

Their rich poison maddens
 Surely and soon,
 Their delicious juices
 Rot sinew and bone.

My companions all plucked
 And still they eat—
 Now am I lonelier
 Than a lone hermit.

Stranger than gibb'ring apes'
Their voices are
Harsher than the shrieking
Discordant macaw—

Daylong have I wandered
In damp mazes
Aseek for clear water
Where no water is.

A LADY visited
 Our pleasant vale ;
 At her gay bidding
 The busy stream did fail.

On the faery treadings
 Of her light feet
 Sprang flimsy poppies
 Instead of the strong wheat.

She has let the young lambs
 Out of their fold,
 They have followed her
 Over the windy wold.

Over wold and mountain
 She bids them roam,
 Looking upon her
 They forget their sweet home.

And heeding her soft voice
 Hear not the howl
 Of fierce hyænas
 Or night's tigers aprowl.

14.

LIE, O lie not there
In the streamlet's lair.
Sleep will close thine eyes.

Go, O go not down
To the deafening weir
Death beyond it lies.

And the dazzling glare
Of the sea doth drown
Venturous argosies.

But on the still mere
Gaze thou, finding there
Peace, and unsought skies.

15.

THE larks asoar,
The tiny woodlanders that madly sing
Telling once more
Of opening buds and loveliness of Spring

Have waken'd now
The dormant beauty of the spirit's reign
That long below
The chill enslavement of the world hath lain. . . .

O fill our wood
With living purity of new-born green
Thou melting mood
That burstest now each heart with beauteous teen !

THE mountains beckon me
 To endure the storms,
 The valleys offer me
 Rest in their long arms.

In the dreamy forests
 Have I ever dreams,
 Whispering my secrets
 To whispering streams,

And what can I do now
 When glad Spring's abroad
 But leap, and merrily
 Laugh, and shout aloud!

WITH thy gentle mein
 With thy beauty mild
 Thou art far more fair
 O heaven-born child
 Than our arméd queen
 Lofty, tutelar.

Thou art far more fair
 But thy day is gone
 She is ever here
 That masterful one
 With her face of stone
 Passionless, austere.

I remember thee
 In a garden old—
 Then the warm sunbeams
 Turned the trees to gold
 Then snowy silver
 Decked the winter's cold.

And for these children
Art thou here to-day
At their shy gladness
Smiling, magic fay
With thy sweet friendship
With thy beauty gay.

AT A CHILDREN'S PARTY,

Xmas, 1914.

NOW shining snow
 Hails the joyous morn
 Now greet we again
 The scarr'd earth reborn
 While clear bells ring
 For the Infant King.

 Through the silence
 From afar they come,
 All ancient wisdom
 Waftingly aroam
 All life's lost gold
 In their song they hold.

 For they bring us
 Those beyond recall
 While endless ages
 From the spirit fall—
 Still, still they ring
 Still ceaselessly sing

Till thy gaze now
Lonely one, discerns
Where strangely wondrous
Thy far childhood burns,
 And star on high
Tells that God is nigh.

Xmas, 1915.

19.

EARTH-STARS.

THROUGH the cloudless night
Doth no rain fall
Only soft moonlight
And the star-rays small,
Gently, wistly,
From the heavens white. . . .
And your seeking rays
O infant eyes
Have now ascended
Love's embracing skies,
Gazing, wond'ring,
And are more than wise.

THE thrush that sings
 And wakes the misted lawns
 Is aureoled
 With blue and green and gold,
 The magic radiance of our childish dawns.

 And seeth he
 The rays about him spread ?
 O sure that song
 So rapturous and strong
 Is not the voicing of this dawn's grey dread.

 He sings, he sings,
 With closed and trancéd eyes,
 Forcing clear hope
 Beyond the sunless skies,
 Glimpsing again the gates of Paradise.

ERE thou sink to rest
 Journeying star
 (Now the calm west
 Paleth afar,
 Now thy fair repose
 Ever fainter grows)

Ere thou vanishest
 Ere life unbar
 To glare unguessed
 Of ruddy war,
 In the blazing morn
 Of passion new-born,

Be our guardian blest
 Who thine still are,
 When the lone quest
 Seem faint and far,
 When thou vanishest
 Pure and lovely star.

F^AINT sea and far sky,
 Clouds that melt on high
 In long noon's magic hour—

 Dews that unseen fall,
 Pale ethereal flower,
 Dim forest strangely tall—

 Shy doe, birdé small,
 Things that swiftly flee
 Whom no hunter can find—

 O lovely, O free,
 How shall straining mind
 Grasp your eternity ?



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